

# Joint Statement on World Refugee Day 2017

*On the occasion of World Refugee Day, Frans **Timmermans**, First Vice President, Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, and Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, made the following statement:*

“As we mark 60 years of European unity, let us not forget that only a few generations ago many of us in Europe were refugees too. With that same human desire to escape conflict and violence, but also to rebuild our lives, and seek a safer future in freedom.

Today around the world more than 65 million people are forced to leave their homes due to conflicts and violence, natural disasters or the very real consequences of climate change. These are 65 million lives, 65 million different stories. And we support them, within and beyond our borders.

As the leading global aid donor, the EU is providing humanitarian assistance and long-term support to refugees and internally displaced people all over the world. We work closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and international partners, and we are contributing to the development of the UN Global compact on Refugees.

Our support reaches those displaced by conflicts in countries from Colombia to Afghanistan, from Iraq to Yemen, from Somalia to South Sudan and Libya. The European Union has mobilised almost €10 billion to support people who have fled the war in Syria. EU assistance provides them with access to education, health care and basic needs. Through this support, the EU gives a lifeline to millions of Syrians inside the country and across the region, while we have also put in place longer-term projects focussed on social inclusion and gender equality.

Along the migratory routes, we are working with urgency to save people’s lives. We are fighting the smuggling networks, and are conducting search and rescue operations at sea, with the support of the European Border and Coast Guard and EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia. These efforts help to save thousands of lives every month.

When we think of refugees, we should never forget where they come from: many have fled conflict and terror; others were born in displacement and know only the life of being a refugee. The most vulnerable of all are children – and the European Union provides millions of them with education, healthcare and protection.

In 2016, EU Member States have granted protection to more than 700,000 asylum seekers. In the European Union we are committed to providing a safe haven for those in need of protection, abiding by the Geneva Convention. This is why we need to reach, without delay, an agreement on the reform of the Common European Asylum System based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity.

While improving the living conditions of refugees in Europe, we are working together with our Member States on establishing more legal and safe pathways in order to replace dangerous and irregular smuggling routes. More than 16,400 people in need of international protection have already been resettled to the European Union since July 2015 and the EU is on track to reach its commitment of 22,504 by September 2017. Beyond that, the European Commission has proposed an EU Resettlement Framework for the future, and is hoping that Member States will move forward on this in an ambitious way.

This is a challenge that neither a single Member State nor the European Union can face alone: global action by the international community is needed. Only by sharing this responsibility can we uphold the safety, dignity and human rights of refugees, and give not only a shelter but most of all, a chance for a future to those who need it most. It is a moral duty, and it is also the best investment we can make in our own security and stability.”